



River of Life II

Archaeological Strip Map and Record

Clifton Meadows, Church Farm, Overy Mead
and Little Wittenham Wood, Oxfordshire

Written Scheme of Investigation

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and Little Wittenham Wood, Oxfordshire
Written Scheme of Investigation

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Purpose of document

This document has been prepared as a Written Scheme of Investigation for Earth Trust. The purpose of this document is to provide an outline of development stages, highlighting planned archaeological fieldwork, aims and objectives of the work, and methodology to be employed.

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Project summary

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Table of contents

1	INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE	7
1.1	Project background	7
1.2	Scope of document	7
1.3	Site location and geology	8
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND	8
2.1	Clifton Meadows	8
2.2	Church Farm	10
2.3	Overy Mead	10
2.4	Little Wittenham Wood	11
3	RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION	11
3.1	Introduction	11
3.2	Clifton Meadows	11
3.3	Church Farm	12
3.4	Overy Mead	13
3.5	Little Wittenham Wood	14
4	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	14
4.1	Archaeological aims	14
5	ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY	15
5.1	Monitoring of archaeological works	15
5.2	Archaeological Strip, Map and Record methodology	17
5.3	Archaeological watching brief methodology	18
5.4	Finds and environmental samples	18
5.5	Human remains	19
5.6	Treasure	19
6	POST-EXCAVATION AND REPORTING	20
6.1	Archaeological fieldwork report	20
7	ARCHIVE	21
7.1	Preparation and deposition	21
8	PROJECT MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	22
8.1	Staffing	22
8.2	Quality and professional standards	22
9	INSURANCE, HEALTH AND SAFETY	22
9.1	Policy and Risk Assessment	22
10	BIBLIOGRAPHY	23



Tables

Table 1 – Depth of archaeology, potential for encountering remains and archaeological mitigation required	16
Table 2 – Preliminary programme	16

Figures

Figure 1 – River of Life II: Site locations	25
Figure 2 – Clifton Meadows	26
Figure 3 – Church Farm	27
Figure 4 – Overy Mead	28
Figure 5 – Little Wittenham Wood	29



1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 DigVentures has been appointed by the Earth Trust (hereafter the Client) to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a programme of proposed works to be undertaken as part of the River of Life II project. The project includes the development of a wetland landscape comprising ponds and backwater channels within areas of the floodplain of the River Thames and River Thame. The programme of works has been prepared in consultation with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (hereafter OCAS) (planning application references P19/S4697/FUL and P19/S4408/FUL).

1.1.2 The development area of the River of Life II project, centred on SU 55680 95737, comprises four habitat creation areas, Clifton Meadows, Church Farm, Overy Mead and Little Wittenham Wood. Two of the sites, Clifton Meadows and Church Farm, are located along the southern and western bank of the River Thames to the west of Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. The third, Overy Mead, is situated to the east of Dorchester on the banks of the River Thame, a tributary of the River Thames. The fourth location, Little Wittenham Wood, comprises an area of ancient woodland located on the south bank of the River Thames and approximately 5 km northeast of Didcot, South Oxfordshire.

1.1.3 Due to the significant archaeological potential of the site, OCAS advised a programme of archaeological investigation to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019), and carried out in accordance with the relevant Standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014). Prior to this Strip, Map and Record stage, the project area has been subject to a pre-planning phase including magnetic gradient survey (at Clifton Meadows, Church Farm and Overy Mead, Whittingham 2019), geoarchaeological assessment (at Clifton Meadows, Church Farm and Overy Mead, Law 2019), desk based assessment (at Little Whittenham Wood, Hogue 2019) and archaeological evaluation (at Clifton Meadows, Church Farm and Overy Mead, Jago et al 2019).

1.1.4 The current Written Scheme of Investigation specifies archaeological works to be undertaken as part of the construction phase, comprising the development of habitat creation areas at each of the four sites (Figure 1). This stage specific WSI must be agreed in advance of any works by the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council.

1.2 Scope of document

1.2.1 This WSI sets out the overarching strategy and archaeological methodology by which the archaeological contractor will implement the archaeological works relating to the development. In format and content, it conforms with current best practice and to the guidance outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance* (2014). This WSI is to be submitted for approval to the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council who provides archaeological planning advice to the Local Planning Authority.



1.3 Site location and geology

- 1.3.1 Clifton Meadows is located at NGR SU 55680 95737. It comprises of three fields, known as Little Mead, Clifton Meadow and Thomas's Meadow, situated along the south bank of the River Thames, opposite the village of Burcot and to the northwest of Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (Figure 1). The fields lie along the southern flood plain of the River Thames, across land currently used for pasture.
- 1.3.2 Church Farm is situated to the west of the River Thames in Oxfordshire (centred at NGR SU 569 943) and is approximately 1 km to the west of Dorchester-on-Thames. The site encompasses three fields of pasture, known as Little Town, Meadows Furlong and Great Meadows, and cover an area of approximately 15.1 ha. The site is bordered in the east by the River Thames and fencing and hedgerows on all other sides (Figure 1).
- 1.3.3 Overy Mead sits to the north of the River Thames, to the east of the River Thame in Oxfordshire (centred at NGR SU 580 936) and immediately to the south-east of Dorchester-on-Thames. The site encompasses two fields of meadow, known as Old Bridge Meadow and Overy Mead Piece, and covers an area of approximately 3.6ha. The site is bordered to the south by the River Thames, the west by the River Thame and dense vegetation, and by a stone wall to the north and by fencing in the east (Figure 1).
- 1.3.4 Little Wittenham Wood is centered on NGR SU 57226 92832. It is located within an area of ancient woodland located on the south bank of the River Thames and approximately 5km northeast of Didcot, South Oxfordshire. Little Wittenham Wood is situated on the distinctive chalk ridge of the Sinodun Hills immediately north of the well-preserved hillfort of Castle Hill. Together with 'Wittenham Clumps' and Long Wittenham Wood it forms a distinctive and prominent landscape feature visible as a landmark over a wide area.
- 1.3.5 The geology is shown as Upper Greensand – sandstone and siltstone (BGS 2019). Streams rise 200-300m south of the south end of the proposed development and drain south-eastwards towards Brightwell. The land at the south end of the proposed development is often wet and was shown as 'liable to flooding' on early OS maps before drainage was improved. The bedrock geology of Little Wittenham Wood comprises of sedimentary rocks of mudstone belonging to the Gault Formation and glauconitic sands of the Upper Greensand Formation. No superficial geology has been recorded (BGS 2019).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND

2.1 Clifton Meadows

- 2.1.1 The earliest indication of human activity at the site dates to the Palaeolithic, with a single findspot of a flint flake recovered at Burcot, 200m north of the River Thame (MOX6072). Fieldwalking undertaken by Oxford Archaeology suggested that later Mesolithic activity was represented by a 'light scattering' of activity in region but with no significant concentrations (Allen and Munby 2006, 352). Two Mesolithic tranchet axes were found at Northfield Farm (MOX11078) and a flint scatter was collected in



the 1980s (MOX6092), just south of the southern field boundary of Thomas' Meadow, comprising 21 objects including flakes, cores and microlith and an axe. The same area was subject to trial excavations, but no archaeological features were recorded. Excavations undertaken in 1969 in Scabbs Field, north of Northfield Farm, revealed a penannular ring ditch including Bronze Age ceramics and a possible cremation (Gray 1977, cited in Allen et al 2006, 9). The investigations at Northfield Farm also recorded a series of enclosures interpreted as pre-Roman and a north to south trackway, and the extent and complexity of cropmarks around the location of the farm led to the area to the south of Clifton meadow being designated as a scheduled monument (List entry 1002925).

- 2.1.2 An extensive series of cropmarks to the south of Clifton Meadows and west of Church Farm reveals a landscape which has been utilised and settled since early prehistory. Interpretation of the cropmarks by Miles (1977, cited in Allen et al 2006, 3) and Baker (1999, cited in Allen et al 2006, 3) has suggested the presence of a Neolithic henge, early Bronze Age barrows, an extensive Bronze Age field system, Iron Age settlement and a Roman trackway with settlement alongside (Allen et al 2006, 9 and fig 1.3). Archaeological trenching in Clifton Meadows recorded the presence of the Roman trackway at three locations (Oxford Archaeology Trenches 12, 20 and 21), identifying two ditches running parallel on a north-south alignment. At the southernmost trench, Trench 12, the trackway ditches were overlain by 0.3m of deposits. At Trench 20, towards the centre of the field, the ditches were overlain by 0.5m of alluvial deposits and excavated to approximately 0.6m deep, 1.1m to the base from the land surface. No artefacts were recovered from the ditch features but waterlogged seeds from the basal layer were 14C dated to 80-250 cal AD (Allen and Munby 2006, 317). At the northernmost trench excavated (Trench 21), features were far more ephemeral, although the presence of an undated linear feature was recorded at a depth of 1m which followed the alignment of the western ditch of the trackway.
- 2.1.3 At Clifton Meadows, the geophysical survey provided further evidence for archaeological activity, in the form of several series of positive linear / curvi-linear responses and trends. The Roman trackway was clearly visible, continuing on a north-south trajectory through the field and almost meeting the southern bank of the River Thames. In addition to the archaeological features, a negative linear response was picked up in Little Mead, running east-west and extending into Clifton Meadows. This feature aligned with an area identified as a putative palaeochannel following work undertaken by Oxford Archaeology (Whittingham 2019).
- 2.1.4 Fieldwalking to the east of the area recovered flint dating to the late Mesolithic, Neolithic and early Bronze Age, and a scattering of Roman pottery and SBM, probably reflecting the peripheral location of the field examined to Northfield Farm (Field 3, Allen and Munby 2006, 330). The Roman trackways (MOX24186) running both north-south and east-west indicate a major communication links across the gravel terraces. Post Roman evidence is less comprehensively studied but Lambrick noted visible ridge and furrow over much to the gravel terrace (Gray 1977, cited in Allen 2006, 9).



2.2 Church Farm

2.2.1 Fewer finds have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the Church Farm area, although the presence of an undated ring ditch recorded (MOX7358) to the northwest of Little Town field confirms the region was utilised to some extent. Fieldwalking undertaken as part of the Oxford Archaeology investigations to the southwest of the area examined a series of undated cropmarks (Field 5, Allen and Munby, 2006). Finds recovered included worked flint of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date, sherds of prehistoric pottery of later Bronze age and Iron Age date, a dense scatter of Roman pottery and a few sherds of Saxon pottery (ibid). To the west, cropmarks also suggest a linear feature running east to west, which is potentially part of the Roman series of trackways that are visible across the area (Allen and Munby, 2006). Immediately opposite, on the eastern bank of the Thames, Roman rectilinear enclosures are situated at right angles to the river, with single finds spots of Iron Age pottery (MOX7246) and evidence for Saxon occupation and an inhumation cemetery (MOX11050), suggesting a concentration of multiple phases of activity in the area. Slightly further south but also on the eastern bank opposite Church Farm, evidence for prehistoric pits and a ring ditch was also recorded during gravel extraction in 1973 (MOX7319).

2.2.2 At Church Fields, the geophysical survey provided further possible evidence for archaeological activity in the form of positive linear / curvi-linear responses and trends. However, many anomalies highlighted by the geophysics have been attributed to modern services or land drainage. In addition, the fields showed a variable background with broad/diffuse positive and negative anomalies that were related to natural features/variations, including palaeochannel deposits (Whittingham 2019).

2.3 Overy Mead

2.3.1 A similarly low level of archaeological evidence has been recorded around the site at Overy Mead, although magnetometry survey published in 2011 revealed an extensive series of roadside enclosures linked to the Roman town of Dorchester (Ainslie 2011). The Roman road apparent in the survey, crosses the northern part of the Overy Mead site and potentially links with a Roman street which Frere identified during excavations located in allotments which were, at the time, threatened by housing development (Frere 1984, 91). The line of the street also appears to be reflected in the location of the earlier river crossing and site of the medieval Dorchester Bridge (MOX27265), first mentioned in 1146 and destroyed in 1816.

2.3.2 At Overy Mead, the geophysical survey provided further possible evidence for archaeological activity in the form of positive linear/curvi-linear responses and trends. However, anomalies highlighted by the geophysics have been attributed to modern services or land drainage. In addition, the fields showed a variable background with broad / diffuse positive and negative anomalies that were related to natural features / variations, including palaeochannel deposits (Whittingham 2019).



2.4 Little Wittenham Wood

- 2.4.1 Desk-based assessment revealed evidence of human activity spanning from the Mesolithic through to the present day within the 1 km study area, although direct evidence of activity was limited within the Site itself. No *in situ* archaeological have been identified previously and there is relatively low potential for detecting archaeological remains as much of the area is likely masked by a thick sequence of fine-grained alluvial deposits related to the River Thames (BGS 2019).
- 2.4.2 Evidence of Later Prehistoric activity in the area is especially common for the Later Bronze Age and Early – Middle Iron Age. Most notably the site sits at the foot of Castle Hill (HE Entry No. 1006364), an Iron Age hillfort associated with extensive settlement to the southwest (Lambrick 2014). Previous archaeological interventions have concentrated on land to the south and west of Castle Hill and as such suggestions that the foci of settlement laid to the southwest may be misleading (cf. Allen et al. 2010). Dense woodland cover to the north and within the vicinity of the site restricts the use of non-invasive archaeological techniques and no ground proofing of the settlement distribution has been provided through intrusive archaeological excavations. If the watercourse running through the site existed in antiquity then it may have formed a focus for human activity and a natural routeway from Castle Hill to the River Thames.
- 2.4.3 Evidence of Roman, Early Medieval, Medieval, and Post-Medieval activity is relatively limited although isolated discoveries have been made nearby to the site and at the foot of Castle Hill. Historic Landscape Characterisation indicated that most of the site is covered by ancient woodland and cartographic sources support this assumption indicating that it was forested from at least the 18th century AD. However, LiDAR suggests ridge-and-furrow underlies the woodland to the east of the streams, sluices and embankment perhaps indicating much of the area was farmland and only more relatively recently forested. Irrespective, whether farmland or forested the archaeological potential is relatively low for the Early Medieval, Medieval and Post-Medieval era.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The following section details the results of pre-planning archaeological evaluation trenching at Clifton Meadows, Church Farm and Overy Mead, as part of the River of Life II project (Jago et al 2019). Previous works have not been undertaken at Little Whittenham Woods due to the overgrown nature of the site, although desk based assessment provided detailed baseline information about the archaeological potential of the location, summarised above (Hogue 2019).

3.2 Clifton Meadows

- 3.2.1 The archaeology recorded during the 2019 evaluation was relatively sparse at Clifton Meadows. A series of linear anomalies observed on the geophysical survey were targeted for investigation (Whittingham 2019), exposing a couple of ditches which most likely bounded the edges of a trackway and associated finds suggest that the



feature is Roman dating from the C1st – C2nd AD (Jago et al 2019). A number of isolated geophysical responses were also targeted for further investigation, identifying a small number of features including a linear and three circular cut features, although none provided dating evidence. A large timber was recovered that may have been set or driven-in from the ground above, which was likely structural serving as a post/pile base. Most of the features suggest that activity took place when conditions were relatively wet, with the trackway bounded by drainage ditches.

3.2.2 All the archaeological features were masked and deeply buried by alluvium, with the uppermost archaeological horizon between 0.89 – 1.00 m below ground level, 45.55 - 45.66 m AOD. Even though the archaeology was encountered at a similar depth throughout Clifton Meadows, the underlying strata was highly variable, with archaeological features overlying alluvium, peat or river terrace gravels. This likely reflected variation in the underlying superficial geology. Interpolation of the available stratigraphic data suggests that the underlying river terrace gravels vary between approximately 45.1 to 45.6 m AOD (Jago et al 2019, Figure 12). Most of the archaeology was concentrated and survived where the underlying river terrace gravels are relatively high, along the route of the Roman trackway and this area may have been an advantageous choice for a trackway as it would have been slightly higher above the floodplain. Conversely, the greatest potential for understanding the past environment resides with the peat horizons which survived only towards the east of Clifton Meadows, where they may fill a depression or palaeochannel in the underlying river terrace gravels.

3.2.3 Based on the sparsity of the archaeological features it appears likely that the activity on the site was relatively limited and at the periphery of the Roman settlement identified to the south of Clifton Meadow (Allen et al 2006, 9 and fig 1.3). The identified Roman trackway has been previously investigated through excavation and the age of the feature established through radiocarbon dating of environmental remains (Allen and Munby 2006, 317). The recent excavations provide the only finds from trackway and refine the age of the trackway indicating that it dates to the C1st – C2nd AD. Based on the results of the archaeological interventions, geophysical investigation and aerial photographic data it is highly probable that the trackway survives across much of Clifton Meadows. However, it remains unclear what happens to the trackway at its most northern extent along the southern edge of the River Thames. It is plausible that the trackway once served a river crossing-point (Forster et al. 2019) and the archaeological resource may be of some regional significance for establishing the location of river crossing-points and the nature of riverine settlement along the River Thames during the Roman period, topics identified as needing further focused research in the *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (Heys and Hind 2014, 184).

3.3 Church Farm

3.3.1 At Church Farm, the 2019 excavations revealed a couple of ditches which, as at Clifton Meadows, are likely to mark the edges of a trackway that ran broadly parallel to the River Thames, curving slightly along its north – south alignment. Even though the geophysical results were mostly inconclusive, the trackway was partially observable as negative curvi-linear responses in Little Town Field at the north of



Church Farm (Whittingham, 2019). In Trench 26, intercutting linear and circular features were also identified, corresponding with an area of strong positive response and linear/curvi-linear anomalies. None of these features could be excavated due to wet conditions, although appeared likely to be drainage ditches cutting through earlier pits. In Trenches 37, a linear feature was identified that likely served as a drainage ditch, it did not correspond with any anomalies identified on the geophysical survey. No finds were recovered from any of the features in Church Farm, as such the chronological phasing for the archaeological features is unclear. However, the intercutting nature of the features suggest at least two phases of activity. Many of the features suggest that activity took place when conditions were relatively wet, with the ditches in-filled gradually by alluvium suggesting they likely functioned as drainage. In general, activity appears likely to have been relatively ephemeral. However, the identification of pit features truncated by later ditches suggests an earlier phase of activity.

3.3.2 As at Clifton Meadow, the archaeology was relatively sparse at Church Farm. All the archaeological deposits were covered by alluvium, with the archaeology exposed between 0.53 – 0.90 m below ground level, 46.02 – 45.65 m AOD. Most of the archaeological features were cut into the underlying river terrace gravels. Interpolation of the available stratigraphic data suggests that the underlying river terrace gravels varies between approximately 44.6 to 46.0 m AOD (Jago et al 2019, Figure 13). All archaeology was identified to the western half of the Site, where the underlying river terrace gravels are relatively high and as a result overlying thicknesses of alluvium relatively shallow. An absence of archaeology to towards the east of the site, increased thickness of alluvium, and relatively deeply buried river terrace gravels suggests that the area was much wetter and less suitable for habitation in antiquity.

3.3.3 Based on the sparsity of the archaeological features it appears that activity was relatively limited. None of the features were datable and as such no absolute chronology can be established. However, intercutting features indicate at least two phases of activity. Evidence of human activity is relatively sparse in the immediate vicinity, although fieldwalking has recovered finds dating from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and early Medieval periods (Allen and Munby, 2006). To the west, an E-W aligned linear cropmark has been identified from aerial photographs, which may potentially be part of series of trackways dating to the Roman period (Allen and Munby, 2006, fig 14.7). The trackway identified during the archaeological evaluation may potentially be part of this Roman series of trackways and was superficially comparable with the Roman trackway uncovered at Clifton Meadows.

3.4 Overy Mead

3.4.1 At Overy Mead the 2019 evaluation trenching was distributed to investigate the nature of archaeological remains in the area, with the site located potentially on the alignment of a Roman street and an extensive series of roadside enclosures identified to the north and east of the area (Forster et al. 2019). Layers of made ground were identified at the base of the sequence containing Roman pottery sherds dating from the 1st-century AD, overlain by a series of layers reflecting the alternation of episodes of intentional causeway maintenance/construction and



subsequent accumulation. The archaeological deposits relating to the causeway were exposed immediately below ground level, 46.13 – 46.33m AOD. No dating evidence was recovered from the causeway and all archaeology identified was concentrated to the northwest of the site.

- 3.4.2 Previous geophysical survey results were inconclusive for Overy Mead (Whittingham 2019), however archaeological evaluation indicates survival of significant archaeological deposits associated with the building up of the ground level during the Roman period. An extensive series of Roman roadside enclosures were identified from magnetometry survey to the east of Overy Mead (Ainslie 2011, fig 1) and raising of the ground level may have been related to activities such as land reclamation and/or flood alleviation. No evidence of a Roman street was identified, as projected from magnetometry survey and excavations located in the centre of Dorchester-on-Thames (Frere 1984, 91). Nonetheless, Overy Mead is well located for helping to better understand the extent of settlement associated with Dorchester-on-Thames, which represents an opportunity to explore the diversity of settlement patterns during the Roman era (Heys and Hind, 2014, 161). No datable evidence was recovered from the causeway, but it has previously been considered based as relating to the earlier river crossing, first mentioned in 1146 AD and replaced in the early-19th century AD (Selway Richards, 2011).

3.5 Little Wittenham Wood

- 3.5.1 Due to the dense woodland coverage of the impacted areas at Little Wittenham Wood, previous archaeological work has not been undertaken.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Archaeological aims

- 4.1.1 The development area of the River of Life II project is situated in a landscape with evidence for settlement and use since early prehistory. Each of the four locations demonstrates varying archaeological potential, evidenced through previous investigation and desk-based research. The archaeological strip, map and record will seek to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains encountered within the areas impacted through the development area.

- 4.1.2 The archaeological aims listed below take account of the aims and objectives set out in the Regional Research Framework for the Solent-Thames Region (Hey and Hind 2014). The archaeological works undertaken at each of the areas included in the development are designed to achieve the following:

- 4.1.3 **Aim 1 – To record, with sufficient detail, archaeological features impacted through the development of the site, and to establish the extent, nature and chronology of any recorded archaeology.**

Q1. Can we corroborate chronological phasing for archaeological features impacted at the Site?



Q2. What are the typical and atypical features of the area under investigation, and did this influence the functions and activities that took place?

4.1.4 Aim 2 - To investigate the nature of surviving archaeological deposits, and the presence of deposits masking archaeological material.

Q3. How well do deposits and artefacts survive, and how deeply are they buried?

Q4. What is the current state of the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental material across the site?

Q5. Can the palaeoenvironmental data recovered from sampling in the trenches inform us about past land use and activity?

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

5.1 Monitoring of archaeological works

5.1.1 DigVentures will inform OCAS prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Each location will be monitored down to the relevant archaeological horizon within impacted areas (see Figures 2 - 5), its depth having been informed by previous archaeological works and deposit modelling (see Jago et al 2019). Stripping of the Site will be undertaken to a programme agreed in advance by the main works contractor and the client with guidance from the archaeological contractor in consultation with OCAS. Due to the nature of deposits and close proximity to the river, there is high probability that areas excavated will be inundated with water. Therefore, the archaeological methodology requires a managed process of stripping – with enough flexibility to adapt to rising water levels – followed by immediate record and sampling of revealed archaeological features.

5.1.2 Table 1 outlines the expected depth of the archaeological horizon and the potential for encountering archaeological remains. Archaeological potential has been determined based on the results of the evaluation trial trenching and the maximum construction depth, with values assigned as follows:

- None – Top of archaeology is below the maximum depth of excavation.
- Low – No archaeology was encountered during the evaluation stage and no significant remains are expected.
- Medium – Low levels of archaeology were encountered during the evaluation stage and it is anticipated that similar results may be found.
- High – Multiple archaeological features were encountered during the evaluation stage and it is expected that more will be found.

5.1.3 In areas of high and medium potential a Strip, Map and Record will be required, and where the potential is deemed to be low, a Watching Brief. Where the maximum depth of excavation will not exceed the top of the archaeological horizon, no further archaeological work will be required. If archaeological features are exposed at the level of impact a full strip, map and record or watching brief methodology will be undertaken as appropriate (see sections 5.2 and 5.3).



Site	Area	Top of Archaeology (m AOD)	Maximum Depth of Construction (m AOD)	Likelihood of Encountering Archaeology	Archaeological mitigation required
Clifton Meadows	B1	45.50	44.50	Low	Watching brief
	B2	45.33	44.50	Low	Watching brief
	B3	45.40	44.50	Medium	Strip Map Record
	B4	45.05	44.50	High	Strip Map Record
	P1	45.80	45.00	Medium	Strip Map Record
	P2	45.70	45.00	Medium	Strip Map Record
	P3	45.69	45.00	Medium	Strip Map Record
	P4	45.70	45.00	Low	Watching brief
	P5	45.33	45.00	Medium	Strip Map Record
	P6	45.40	45.00	Low	Watching brief
	P7	45.40	45.00	Low	Watching brief
	P8	45.20	45.00	Low	Watching brief
P9	45.20	45.00	Low	Watching brief	
Church Farm	B5	45.00	44.77	High	Strip Map Record
	P10	44.92	45.12	None	None
	P11	44.88	45.12	None	None
	P12	45.06	45.12	None	None
	P13	45.05	45.12	None	None
	P14	45.05	45.12	None	None
	P15	45.05	45.12	None	None
Overy Mead	B6	44.76	43.40	High	Strip Map Record
	B7	44.66	44.00	Low	Watching brief

Table 1 – Depth of archaeology, potential for encountering remains and archaeological mitigation required

Site	Nature of impact	Method	Preliminary programme
Clifton Meadows	Excavation of ponds and backwaters	Strip Map Record & Watching Brief	June / July 2020
Church Farm	Excavation of ponds and backwaters	Strip Map Record	June / July / August 2020
Overy Mead	Excavation of backwaters	Strip Map Record & Watching Brief	July / August 2020
Little Wittenham Wood	Excavation of ponds	Strip Map Record	September 2020

Table 2 – Preliminary programme



5.1.4 Once all archaeological remains have been recorded and sampled appropriately, the site archive will be made available via DigVentures online recording database, Digital Dig Team. Monitoring will therefore be supported through timely access to archaeological results and regular communication between the site archaeologist and OCAS. In the event that unexpectedly complex and widespread archaeological remains are revealed, the Client and OCAS will be informed in order that the provisions of this WSI may be reviewed. Archaeological trenches, the location of archaeological finds of particular interest and environmental samples will be surveyed using a Total Station or GPS and tied into the Ordnance Survey. Variations to the WSI and Method Statement will be agreed in advance with the Client and OCAS.

5.2 Archaeological Strip, Map and Record methodology

5.2.1 All work will comply to ClfA *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (2014) and will be undertaken in accordance with the standards set out within the WSI provided by DigVentures and the requirements of OCAS. The Client will afford reasonable access in order that all archaeological features and deposits revealed during excavations and groundwork can be investigated and recorded appropriately.

5.2.2 All areas will be stripped of overburden deposits with a mechanical excavator under continuous archaeological supervision from outside the exclusion zone of the excavator, down to the first archaeological horizon. All machine excavation will be carried out using a toothless bucket and once each area has been stripped to depth, access will be agreed with the construction contractor to enter the area so it can be cleaned and all features recorded in plan and investigated appropriately.

5.2.3 It is expected ground water levels will be high and it is expected that most areas will become inundated with water within 24 hours of them being open. It is envisaged that where features can be excavated down to the depth of the archaeology within one day, there should be enough time to enable investigations to take place before the water level rises to cover the remains in the trench. However, where ponds and backwater channels will take more than one day to excavate, a staged approach to the stripping will need to occur. Each area will be split into manageable sections that can be excavated by machine in one day (estimated at 250-300m³), leaving a 5m physical barrier of unexcavated ground between it and the area to be excavated the following day. A team of a least two professional archaeologists will then start recording and investigating any archaeological remains found in the previous days area before it becomes inundated with water. Work shall continue in this manner until the area of the proposed water feature has been fully excavated (with the exception of the unexcavated areas between sections, which shall be subject to a watching brief when finally removed).

5.2.4 Where archeological excavation of features is planned, a sufficient sample of each feature type/deposit will be examined in order to establish the date, nature, extent and condition of the archaeological remains, encompassing the following percentage interventions:



- 100% excavation of structural remains and other areas of significant and specific activity (domestic, industrial, religious, hearths, 'special'/patterned deposits in pits or ditches etc.);
- 10% of non-structural linear features, including all intersections, terminals and at least one 'clean' intersection to minimise the risk of intrusive and/or residual finds;
- 50% sample of all pits;
- All post and stake holes that relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 100% sample;
- Post and stake holes that do not relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 50% sample.

5.3 Archaeological watching brief methodology

5.3.1 All work will comply to ClfA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014) and will be undertaken in accordance with the standards set out within the WSI provided by DigVentures and the requirements of OCAS. The Client will afford reasonable access in order that all archaeological features and deposits revealed during excavations and groundwork can be investigated and recorded appropriately.

5.3.2 All areas identified subject to a watching brief will be stripped of overburden deposits with a mechanical excavator while being continuously monitored by a professional archaeologist from outside the exclusion zone of the excavator. All machine excavation will be carried out using a toothless bucket. If/When archaeological remains are encountered, the archaeologist shall communicate with the machine operator to enable safe access to the area so that an assessment of the remains can be undertaken. Any archaeology will be investigated and rapidly recorded so that there is as little disruption to the project construction programme as possible.

5.4 Finds and environmental samples

5.4.1 Finds will be treated in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised 2014), and the *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (2014), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below. Archaeological material will be handled and sorted following advice in Watkinson and Neal (1998).

5.4.2 All artefacts will be retained from excavated contexts, except features or deposits undoubtedly of modern date. In these circumstances, sufficient artefacts will only be retained to elucidate the date and function of the feature or deposit. Finds recovered will be assessed by appropriately qualified specialists, who will examine the finds to provide an identification, date and provenance of the material, and will also evaluate the significance of the assemblage.

5.4.3 All artefacts from the investigation will, as a minimum, be washed, counted, weighed and identified. Any stratified ironwork will be x-rayed and stored in a stable condition along with other fragile and delicate material. Suitable material, primarily



the pottery and non-ferrous metalwork, will be scanned to assess the date range of the assemblage. The results of this scan will be appended to the submitted report.

5.4.4 Bulk environmental soil samples for plant macrofossils, small animal bones and other small artefacts will be taken from appropriate sealed and dateable archaeological contexts (each context will normally be sampled). Samples of between 40-60 litres will be taken or 100% of smaller contexts. Samples will not be taken from the intersection of features. Bulk environmental soil samples will be processed by flotation and scanned to assess the environmental potential of deposits, but will not be fully analysed. The residues and sieved fractions will be recorded and retained with the project archive. A statement on the environmental potential of excavated deposits will be included to the evaluation report. Environmental finds will be treated in accordance with relevant guidance, including reference to the following Historic England guidance documents;

- 2011 Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (second edition)
- 2014 Animal Bones and Archaeology: Guidelines for Best Practice
- 2015 Geoarchaeology: Using earth sciences to understand the archaeological record

5.4.5 The project manager will ensure that the results of palaeoenvironmental investigation, industrial residue assessments, analyses and other scientific analyses are included in a full evaluation report.

5.5 Human remains

5.5.1 In the event of discovery of any human remains, the OCAS will be informed immediately. Any remains will be left in situ, covered and protected, until the Client, Coroner and Local Planning Authority Advisor have been informed. Where development will unavoidably disturb them, they will be fully recorded, excavated and removed from the site subject to compliance with the relevant Ministry of Justice Licence, which will be obtained by DigVentures.

5.5.2 Should human remains be excavated, all excavation and post-excavation will be in accordance with the standards set out in ClfA Technical Paper 13 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed remains* (1993) and Historic England 2004 *Human Bones from Archaeological Sites A guideline for best practice for producing human osteological assessments and analytical reports*. The final placing of human remains following analysis will be subject to the requirements of the Ministry of Justice Licence.

5.6 Treasure

5.6.1 In the event of discovery of artefacts covered or potentially covered by The Treasure Act 1996, their excavation and removal will be undertaken following notification of the Client, Coroner, British Museum and OCAS. Advice on reporting and management of any Treasure finds will be sought from the appropriate Finds Liaison Officer.



6 POST-EXCAVATION AND REPORTING

6.1 Archaeological fieldwork report

6.1.1 Within six weeks of completion of all fieldwork, a draft report setting out the results will be produced and forwarded to the Client and OCAS for approval. The report will be prepared in accordance with the guidance given in the ClfA *Standard and Guidance for excavation* (Revised 2014) and ClfA *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (Revised 2014), except where superseded by statements below. On approval, a final of the report will be submitted the CHER and a digital copy uploaded to OASIS within two weeks of approval.

6.1.2 Emphasis will be given to placing the results into the context of the archaeology of the region, and their significance in the context of the priorities outlined in the research framework for the Regional Research Framework for the Solent-Thames Region (Hey and Hind 2015). The report will comply with the requirements of OCAS and, in any case, may include:

- a non-technical summary
- a site location plan to at least 1:10,000 scale and with an 8-figure grid reference
- the site code, planning application number, and dates of work carried out
- aims, objectives and methodology of the work undertaken
- a summary by category of the material types recovered
- a summary of the palaeoenvironmental evidence
- results and conclusions, including a consideration of the archaeological evidence from within the site set in its broader landscape and historic setting
- plans and sections at an appropriate scale locating the site, the, known and projected archaeological deposits and the extent and nature of colluvial and/or alluvial deposits, including od heights
- tabulation of finds data by context and by material type
- tabulation of contexts and archaeological features recorded
- statement of archive location

6.1.3 The preparation of the report may involve the following elements:

- the conservation of appropriate material, including x-rays of ironwork
- the spot dating of all pottery from excavated contexts. Spot dating will be corroborated by scanning of other categories of material
- the preparation of a preliminary phased site matrix with supporting lists of contexts by type (ditch fill, pit fill etc.), by spot-dated phase (early bronze age, middle iron age, roman etc.), by structural grouping (e.g. contexts by pit, by building etc.), supported by preliminary phase plans
- a statement on each category of material, including reference to quantity, provenance, range and variety, condition and existence of other primary sources
- the selection and prioritisation of bulk soil samples taken for environmental and artefactual data in the light of preliminary phasing. sieving, processing and scanning of selected soil samples will be undertaken and an assessment statement on charred food and plant remains, including references as for the categories of material



- a statement of potential for each material category and for the data collection as a whole will be prepared, including specific questions that can be answered and the potential value of the data to local, regional and national investigation priorities
- 6.1.4 All specialist reporting will be undertaken by experienced specialists, including;
- Animal bone – Hannah Russ
 - Environmental – Rosalind McKenna
 - Geoarchaeology – Joanne McKenzie
 - Prehistoric pottery – Rob Hedge
 - Roman pottery – Jane Evans
 - Human bone – Natasha Powers
 - Medieval / post medieval pottery – Paul Blinkhorn
 - Glass – Cecily Cropper
 - Lithics – Joshua Hogue
 - Small finds and leather – Quita Mould
- 6.1.5 Where appropriate and subject to further agreement, further analysis may be undertaken and the results published in a journal appropriate to the significance of finds.

7 ARCHIVE

7.1 Preparation, deposition and publication

- 7.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with the *CIfA Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (2014), and in line with guidance from the Oxfordshire County Council.
- 7.1.2 The material archive from the project, including the finds and subject to the wishes of the landowner will be deposited at the County Archive Facility. Transfer of Title will be secured from the landowner where agreement has been achieved to deposit the archive with the County Archive Facility.
- 7.1.3 Guidelines for preparation and deposition have been fully reviewed to ensure that the curator's requirements can be fully met. Deposition of the Digital Archive will follow guidelines outlined by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS 2015), and a digital version of the project archive will be deposited with ADS.
- 7.1.4 All of the results of the fieldwork will be published in local, regional or national journals depending on the level of the significance of the remains uncovered such as *Oxoniensia* the annual journal of Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society (OAHS).



8 PROJECT MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

8.1 Staffing

8.1.1 The fieldwork will be directed and supervised by Chris Casswell MCIfA, Head of Fieldwork, DigVentures, supported by a team of professional archaeologists, who will be on site, having been given prior notification by the Client, as soon as groundworks are being undertaken that could have an impact on potential archaeological features. No groundworks that could have an impact on extant archaeology should be undertaken prior to the archaeological excavation if it has been determined that mitigation is required. The overall responsibility for the conduct and management of the project will be held by one of DigVentures' Projects Directors, Brendon Wilkins MCIfA, who will visit the fieldwork as appropriate to monitor progress and to ensure that the scope of works is adhered to. The appointed Projects Director and Head of Fieldwork will be involved in all phases of the project through to its completion.

8.1.2 The analysis of the finds and environmental data will be undertaken by DigVentures' core staff or external specialists (identified above), using DigVentures' standard pro forma recording system. The work will be carried out under the supervision of the following departmental managers under the overall direction of the Projects Director. Further information on DigVentures' external finds and environmental specialists can be provided on request.

8.2 Quality and professional standards

8.2.1 DigVentures is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. All senior managers are MCIfA registered. The company endorses the *Code of conduct* of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and complies with the Institutes' *Standards and guidance* documents.

8.2.2 All core staff employed by DigVentures are appropriately qualified and employed in line with Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Code of conduct*. DigVentures operates a Project Management System based on MoRPHE. All projects are undertaken under the direction of the Project Manager who is responsible to the Projects Director, who ensures the maintenance of quality standards within the organisation. The Managing Director has ultimate responsibility for all of the company's work. CVs of core staff can be found in the Appendices.

9 INSURANCE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

9.1 Policy and Risk Assessment

9.1.1 Health and safety considerations will be of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices will override archaeological considerations at all times. DigVentures will ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with its company Health and Safety Policy (2018), to standards defined in The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and in accordance with the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) health and safety manual Health and Safety in Field



Archaeology (1996). Trench excavation and design shall conform to Health and Safety legislation, incorporating current best engineering practice where possible.

- 9.1.2 A Risk Assessment will be undertaken in advance of fieldwork, under the direction of Chris Casswell (Head of Fieldwork) and approved by Brendon Wilkins (Projects Director) in liaison with the Client and OCAS. A copy will be given to OCAS prior to the commencement of works. DigVentures holds public liability insurance (£5,000,000), employers liability insurance (£10,000,000) and professional indemnity insurance (£5,000,000).

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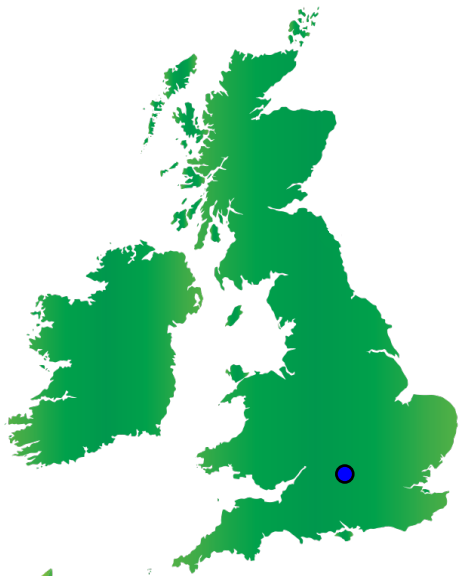
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 Dig Ventures

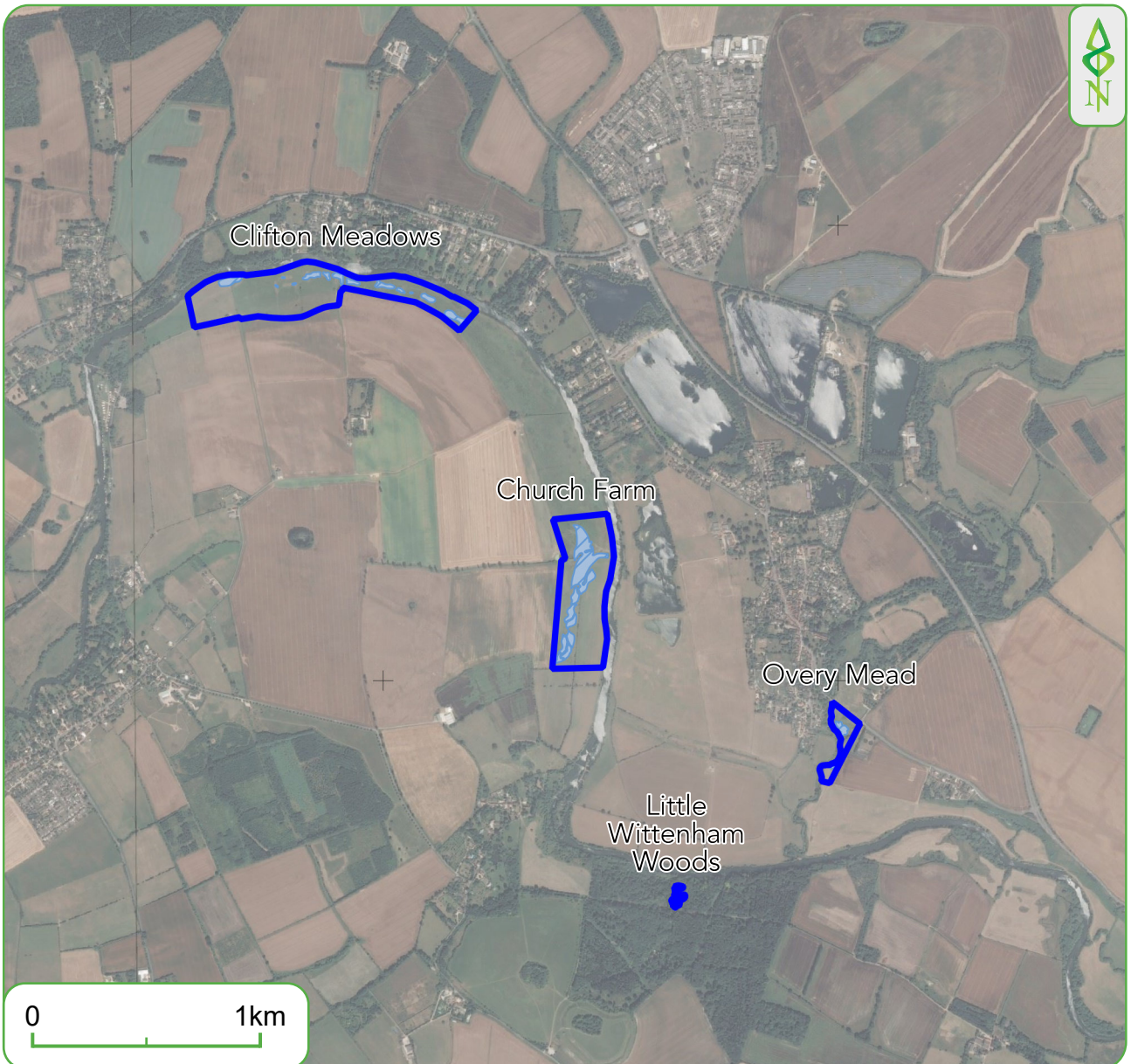
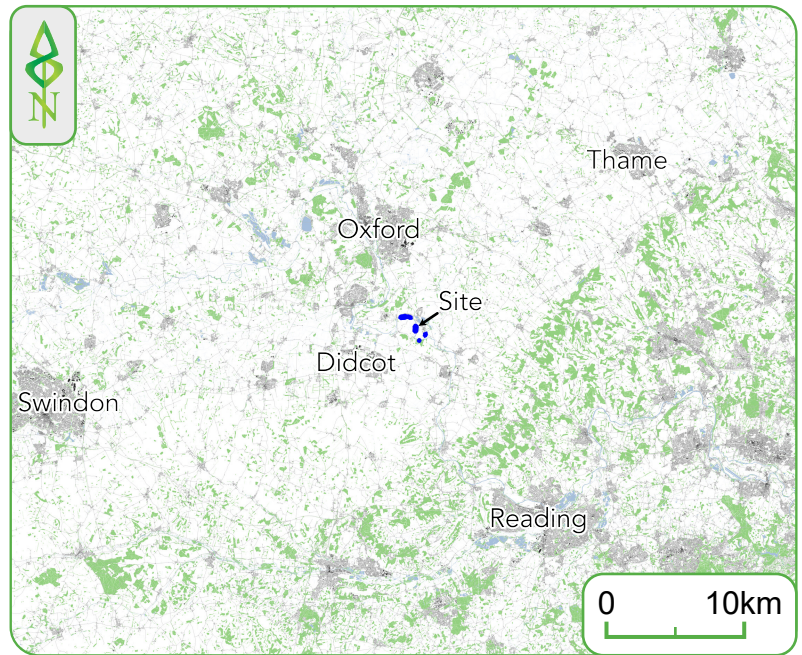
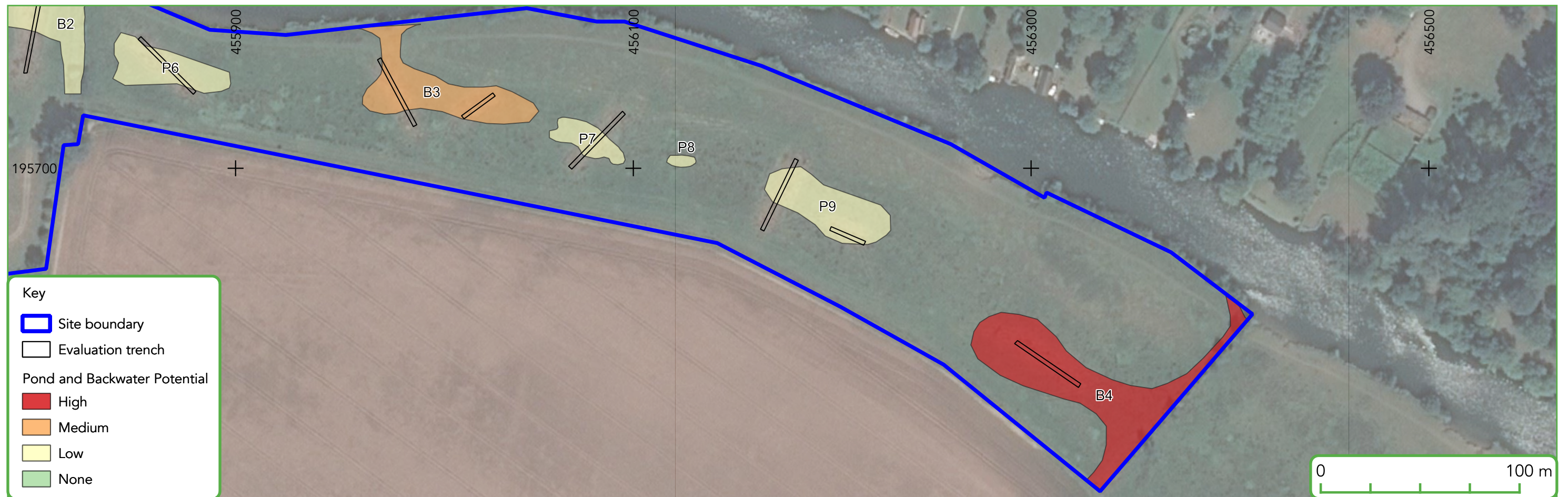


Figure 1 - River of Life II: Site location



Key

- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Pond and Backwater Potential
 - High
 - Medium
 - Low
 - None



Figure 2 - Clifton Meadows

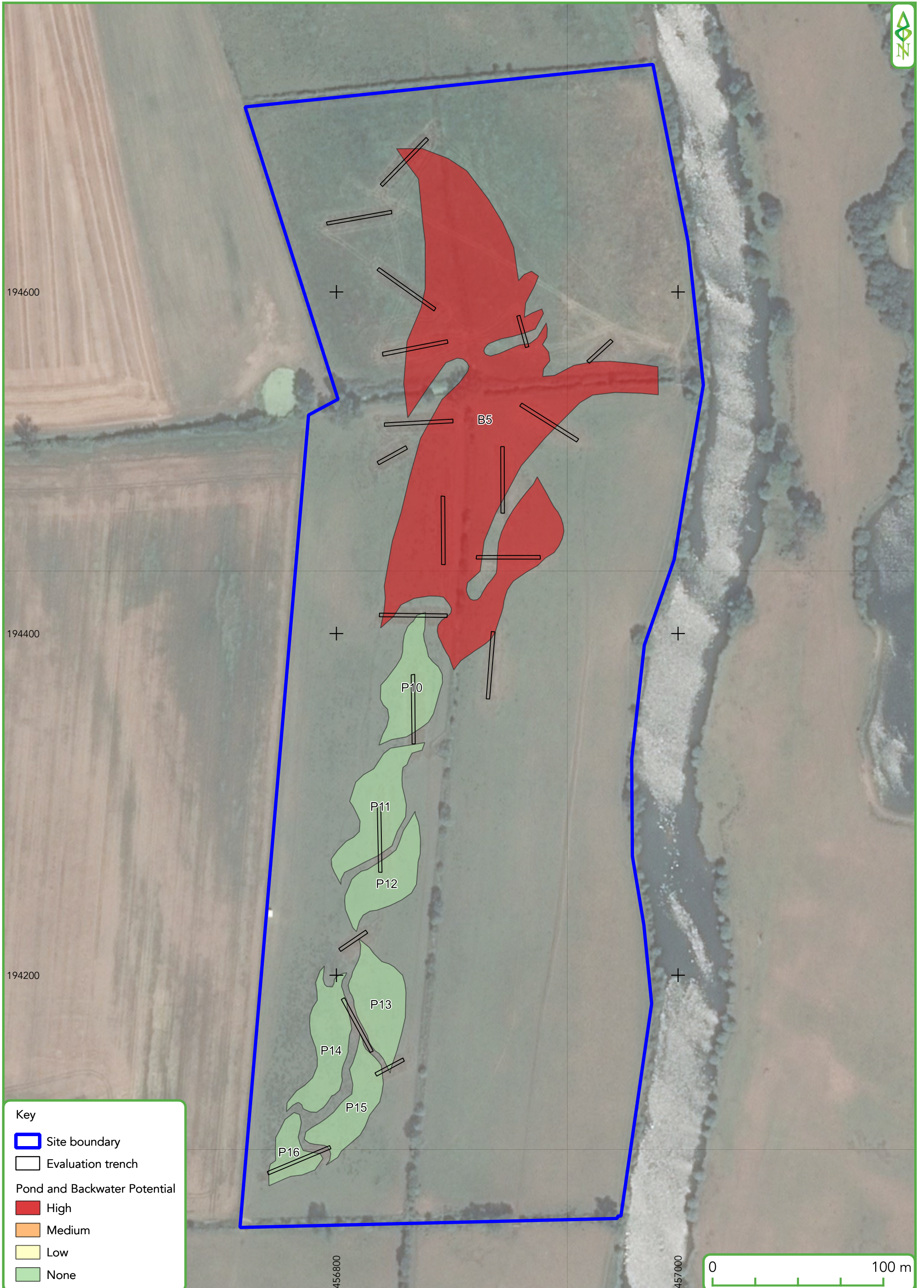


Figure 3 - Church Farm

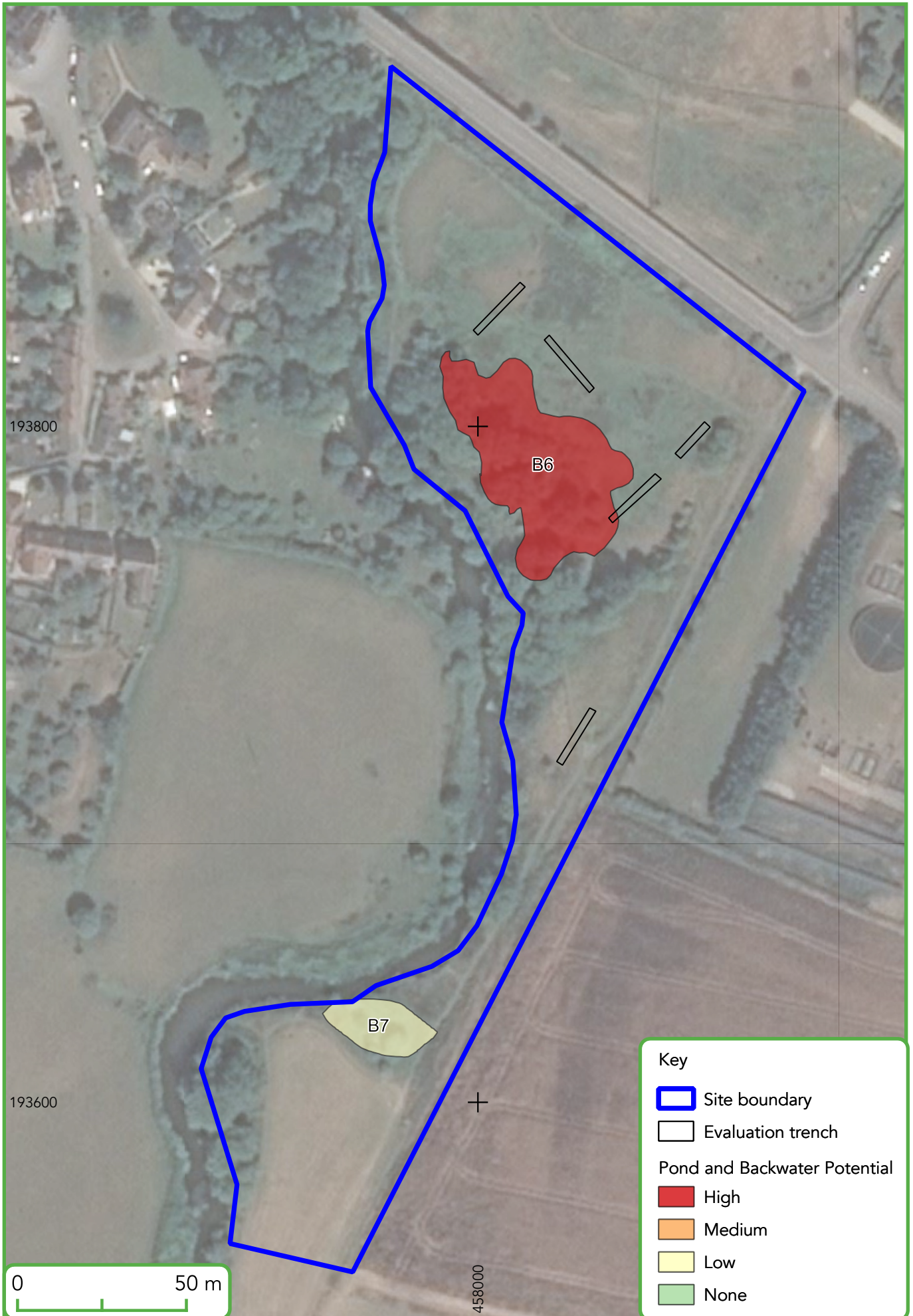


Figure 4 - Overy Mead



Figure 5 - Little Wittenham Woods